Essay Topic: My experience of L2 Acquisition – a success or failure?

Learning a second language through acquisition allows students to subconsciously accept the knowledge in a natural and enjoyable way and store it deeply in the brain through usage in communication. If such opportunity knocks on your door, acquisition is the most practical and easiest way to learn a second language. I started learning Russian as my second language since I became a university student, adult student, which made it more difficult to learn a foreign language. Even though I studied for a year in Korea, all I knew of Russian was alphabets and that is when I decided to apply for the exchange student program to Belarus. My experience has proven me that the most efficient and effective way to learn a language is through acquisition.

As an adult student, I was indeed a very **goal-oriented** and **self-motivated** student. Instead of Moscow and St. Petersburg, I chose Minsk, because there were barely any Koreans, not even an embassy and I thought that would allow me to speak only Russian. As Minsk is well-known for being one of the most dangerous places to live in for its hooliganism, Europe’s last dictatorship, and poverty, I needed to make the best out of the situation. With such risk-taking, there had to be a satisfying result from the experience, hence I studied so hard to master Russian. My ultimate goal was not just to be **communicatively competent** speaker, but to be considered a native speaker who has professional language skills to discuss difficult topics including politics, economy, and literature. After university, I had three private tutoring, lived with a Russian family referred by my professor, and only exposed myself to Russian and Russians. With such enthusiasm and putting myself in such environment, my level of Russian sky-rocketed after 3 months and had to move up to higher level classes at the university.

I genuinely believe that acquisition is the **best practical way** of learning a language. Language is a culture. You have to use it every day and connect with the native speakers to understand the language and the expressions. At the university, the professors focused on conversational dialogues, group assignment, demonstration, roleplays, and application of expressions and vocabularies As I am a **kinesthetic learner,** I remembered vocabularies, grammar, and expressions through practice and applied to actual conversations outside the university. I had only Russian friends, went to social gatherings more than I normally would, and went to markets to pick up different dialogues and intonations. I learnt something new every day in **natural order**. I was not scared to make mistakes and speak up, because I knew that was the only way I could improve my language skills. I was thankful for the opportunity where I can apply what I have learnt directly to my day-to-day life and the language got embedded in my head naturally.

As showcased, I built good **rapport** with my professors. Luckily enough, I met such incredible professors who provided continuous encouragement, the feeling of achievement, and quick recognition of my improvements. One of my professors made sure that I sound like a native speaker. With her help, I was able to make more friends, not be bullied by hooligans, and make conversations with strangers, because they thought that I was a local person. Also, one of my professors knew my strength, which was **interpersonal intelligence** and **verbal/linguistic intelligence**. At first, she started off as **an involver** when I was at the beginner level, but once I became fluent enough, she changed into **an enabler,** which resulted in **high learner retention rate**. For instance, my professor made me guess what the author was trying to imply through his poem and provided me with knowledgeable Russian history and culture. What my professors all had in common was that they were humorous, authentic, well-organized, and gave clear feedbacks and directions. I believe that my professor knew **Stephen Krashen’s input hypothesis.** She noticed my everyday improvement and she moved me to more advanced classes. When she provided me with comprehensible input, I was able to eventually understand and learn something new. From reading textbooks to reading and paraphrasing news articles, she provided me with new challenges every class.

In conclusion, my experience in acquiring second language was a huge success. After I returned, I went from bottom of the class to the top of the class, spoke better than the students who lived in Russia for over 10 years, and was able to translate Russian into Korean and English and visa versa. As many say that language is a culture, I believe the best and the most practical way to learn a second language is by acquisition, being with the native speakers, experiencing and adopting to the different culture, and most importantly maintaining high self-esteem and motivation to allow yourself to speak as much as you can.